

September 25, 2001

## **IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEETING NOTES**

**September 6, 2001, 9 p.m.-4 p.m.**

### **NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE OFFICES PORTLAND, OREGON**

#### ***I. Greetings, Introductions and Review of the Agenda.***

The September 6, 2001, Implementation Team meeting, held at the National Marine Fisheries Service's offices in Portland, Oregon, was chaired by Jim Ruff of NMFS and facilitated by Donna Silverberg.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed during the call, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced in the body of the text may be too lengthy to attach; all enclosures referenced are available upon request from NMFS's Kathy Ceballos at 503/230-5420 or via email at [kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov](mailto:kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov).

#### ***2. Updates.***

***A. In-Season Management (TMT).*** Cathy Hlebechuk reported that there have been two face-to-face TMT meetings and one conference call since the last IT meeting; the next scheduled TMT meeting is September 19. The TMT continues to develop river operations in two-week increments, Hlebechuk said; under the current operation, Dworshak is releasing minimum outflow; the project reached elevation 1520 on August 31. Libby continues to release 6 Kcfs; Hungry Horse is being operated to maintain the 3.26 Kcfs Columbia Falls minimum flow. Grand Coulee reached elevation 1278 plus operating range on August 31; the current plan is to fill the project to elevation 1283 by September 30.

The limited summer spill program at The Dalles and Bonneville dams has now ended, Hlebechuk said, with the exception of end-bay attraction spill at Bonneville, which will continue through November 30. The summer spill program started on July 24; the total amount of the spill was 433.5

MW-months (4.85 MAF).

At yesterday's TMT conference call, Hlebechuk said, the decision was made to begin filling reservoirs above MOP at Ice Harbor, Little Goose and Lower Monumental. Ice Harbor will be the first project refilled, as soon as Snake River flows increase sufficiently – current flows at Lower Granite are only 14 Kcfs-17 Kcfs, and there are project minimum flow requirements which preclude refill while total river flow is this low.

Hlebechuk added that the 2001 Water Management Plan is now finalized, with the exception of the Emergency Protocols appendix, which is still being discussed. The TMT Guidelines have also been finalized. The TMT is planning to complete its year-end review on October 31; this review will include information on system survival, 2001 SORs and their disposition, weather pattern information, a review of the power system emergency, Vernita Bar operations and survival, system operations and their effects on fish, the TMT's goals for the year, results from the McNary forebay mixer experiment, McNary survival rates, an analysis of the anomalies in 2001 operations, results from the Lower Granite survival study, and a comparison analysis of 2001 vs. other years.

In response to a question from John Palensky, Hlebechuk said Lower Snake River water temperatures are now falling; they're about 69 degrees, currently. Ruff added that the Dworshak Hatchery water supply temperature problem, which has complicated Dworshak operations in years past, will no longer be a problem beginning next year – that is one of the offset actions which are being accelerated, so that the fix will be in place by next spring, Ruff said.

**B. Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB).** Ruff noted that the ISAB report “A Review of Salmon Recovery Strategies for the Columbia River Basin,” which includes a review of the NMFS 2000 BiOp, the Four Governors' recommendations, the Council's 2001 Fish and Wildlife Program and the federal Conservation of Columbia Basin Fish “All-H” paper, is now available from <http://www.nwcouncil.org>. Jim Fodrea suggested that an ISAB representative be invited to the October IT meeting to provide a presentation on the report.

**C. Water Quality Team (WQT).** No WQT update was presented at today's meeting.

**D. System Configuration Team (SCT).** Bill Hevlin distributed Enclosure D, a summary of recent SCT developments. He touched on the status of the effort to reduce gas generation at Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee Dams, on the Lower Monumental stilling basin erosion repair, on the Bonneville Dam decision document and on the FY '02 CRFM prioritization effort.

With respect to the latter topic, Hevlin said the SCT developed a new set of criteria, which are designed to give priority to those actions called for in the NMFS 2000 BiOp and are more concrete than the criteria applied in past years. The SCT specified high and medium priorities; in the end, the decision was made to defer a number of high-cost items, such as the B1 JBS upgrade. The result is a FY '02 CRFM program that should fit within an \$82 million budget, close to the amount currently being

proposed in Congress, Hevlin said. He noted, however, that the Chief Joseph Dam flow deflectors are not included in the FY '02 CRFM program, because OMB pulled all "new start" projects out of the Corps budget. NMFS and the NW Power Planning Council are concerned about that, said Ruff; if Congress doesn't change its mind, we'll lose a year on a gas abatement project we feel provides water quality improvement and thus is very important. When asked, Ruff suggested that those who want to see the Chief Joseph flow deflectors proceed as planned in 2002 to contact their Congressional representatives.

With respect to the stilling basin repairs at Lower Monumental Dam, Hevlin said, the Corps has learned that it will be receiving supplemental funding to repair the damage beginning in the spring of 2002, once the danger of involuntary spill is sufficiently reduced. The contract will also include the installation of end-bay flow deflectors, which will help dissipate the hydraulic conditions that cause the erosion. The stilling basin repairs are expected to be completed in time for the 2003 spill season, Hevlin said; in the meantime, however, there will be no spill for fish passage at Lower Monumental in 2002.

With respect to the Bonneville Dam decision document, Hevlin reminded the IT that an SCT subcommittee has been formed to assist the Corps in developing an analysis which could be used to guide configuration decisions to increase project survival at Bonneville dam. The subcommittee's report is now available for review, Hevlin said; it includes the following consensus recommendations:

- Put priority on PH2 operations
- Install a corner surface collector at PH2
- Install spillway flow deflectors
- Continue the effort to improve FGE at PH2.

Hevlin noted that no decision has been made about what to do about juvenile fish passage improvements at PH1, which was the most difficult issue facing the subcommittee. Only two configurations are still under consideration: install a powerhouse surface collector or replace the old JBS system with a state-of-the-art bypass system and new outfall.

Hevlin said regional comments on the PH1 decision document are due tomorrow; the ISRP will also be reviewing the report later this fall. Ruff noted that this project should be of interest to the IT because, whatever fix is ultimately chosen, this will be one of the largest single line-items in the CRFM budget – a total cost in excess of \$100 million. Given the fact that the total annual CRFM budget is only about \$80 million, Ruff said, this is a project that we will need to follow very closely.

***E. TMDL Update.*** No TMDL update was presented at today's meeting.

***F. Other.*** At last week's Council meeting in Portland, said Ruff, NMFS testified in support of a contingency plan for a chum salmon salvage operation in the event that it is needed this year. This was a proposal developed by WDFW, which would only be implemented if needed due to continued

low flows, Ruff said. A technical work group for chum is addressing some of the lessons learned in 2001, including the chum/power operation that was implemented this winter, Ruff said. The intent is to help us identify what might trigger the contingency plan, how many fish could be salvaged, where would they be reared, etc. The Council approved funding for the chum salmon contingency salvage operation at its August meeting, Ruff added.

Jim Fodrea reported that the Corps and Reclamation are preparing an EIS on the proposed VAR Q flood control strategy in the Upper Columbia Basin; the first scoping meetings will be held beginning the last week in October. Those meetings will be held at Grand Coulee, and at various locations in Idaho and in Portland. The report will look at the NEPA documentation needed to implement VAR Q at Libby and Hungry Horse, as well as the additional drawdown (to elevation 1278) at Grand Coulee. It was agreed to place an update on this topic on the November IT agenda.

### ***3. Lessons Learned from 2001.***

Silverberg noted that a series of questions were sent out following the August IT meeting, which the IT participants were asked to consider prior to today's meeting. Ruff reminded the group that the Federal Caucus asked a work group of federal agencies to go through this "lessons learned" exercise; given the uniqueness of the 2001 water year, the Federal Caucus felt it was important to do an especially thorough review. A work group has been formed to address these questions, said Ruff; you were also asked to think about them and bring any thoughts you might have to today's meeting. For example, said Ruff, how did the Regional Executives' process work for folks this year – was it fair? Inclusive? Effective? Adequately coordinated? Specifically, how well did the coordination process work this year, considering the Executive-level interaction and in view of the existing Regional Forum process – what process improvements are needed?

Dick Nason suggested that the Regional Executives' process should be broadened to include all mainstem project operators, including the Mid-Columbia PUDs. Tony Nigro observed that, many times in 2001, the information needed to make an informed decision was not available to review far enough in advance of the meetings at which those decisions were to be made. Nigro suggested that a review of the adequacy of the data and information provided in 2001 would be useful. Howard Schaller observed that the response to and effectiveness (in terms of reducing load) of the temporary energy conservation measures implemented in 2001 was much greater than expected; if 2002 is another drought year, he said, it may make sense to try to get those conservation measures in place earlier.

Bill Tweit observed that a clearer understanding of the relationship between IT and the Regional Executives' process would be helpful; there were a number of parties who wondered why IT was meeting at all, once the Regional Executives more or less took over the decision-making role after the Power System emergency went into effect. At the very least, he said, better communication between the Regional Executives and the IT and its members would be appropriate. Silverberg noted that the Federal Executives relied heavily on their <http://www.salmonrecovery.com> website to disseminate information and updated analyses.

The next question discussed was “What additional steps should be considered to ensure that generation and transmission resources are adequate to meet load under a range of water and market conditions without interrupting fishery operations?” Suggestions included the following:

- Consider ways to communicate the need for funding improvements to the regional transmission system
- Energy conservation efforts need to be implemented sooner
- Earlier discussions and coordination need to take place with non-federal operators, such as the Mid-Columbia PUDs, concerning proposals to transfer spill
- Develop a low-flow contingency plan operation that will provide at least some spill, even in the poorest water years
- Investigation of additional generating resources that will reduce the region’s reliance on the hydrosystem to meet future loads – combustion turbines, wind, cogeneration, etc.

Next, the IT addressed the following question: “What additional tools are available to address 2001 conditions if they occur again?” Meeting participants offered the following suggestions:

- Voluntary load reductions (buydowns)
- Additional energy sources, including conservation
- Develop a revised power plan for low-flow years
- Develop a better understanding of the applicable system constraints (reliability, financial, load etc.) as well as acceptable levels of risk
- Develop faster, more timely reliability and financial analysis tools
- Review the efficacy of the analytical tools used in 2001 with an eye to their improvement; build in additional transparency, including peer review of data and output
- Ensure that there are enough PIT-tagged fish available for real-time monitoring purposes, as well as for survival studies, especially in the mid-Columbia reach; ask FPAC and MCCC to develop a stepped-up monitoring and evaluation study plan.
- Develop M & E contingency plans with studies that can be dusted off and put in place quickly in the event of low water years.

It was agreed to add an update on the 2002 M & E program to the October IT agenda.

Next, the IT considered this question: “Should the 2001 emergency operating criteria be modified, and, if so, how should the criteria be changed for future use?” The group offered the following thoughts:

- Get the criteria out to the region earlier – revisit the weighting of the criteria at the executive level.
- Need to develop a broader range of conditions that would still meet BiOp fish operations
- Increase the region’s comfort and confidence in the predictive tools used to inform-decision-making – did this year’s analytical tools match reality?

- What, exactly, do the criteria mean, particularly with respect to loss-of-load probability? (Explain in lay language)
- Did the criteria have equal weight?

The final question on the list was “What were the overall lessons learned in 2001 operations?” In the end, the group offered the following succinct summary:

- Low flow sucks.

Ruff noted that it would be helpful if the TMT could complete at least some facets of its year-end review analysis at its September 19 meeting, in particular, a summary of the fish passage, survival and run timing information, whether or not reservoir elevation targets were met, when spill was provided, what portion of the migration was covered by spill – in short, the “system operations and their effects on fish” item from the TMT list. Hlebechuk replied that some of this information should be fairly simple to assemble. Margaret Filardo added that the Fish Passage Center is in the process of developing its year-end summary of fish passage and survival information. Nigro suggested that the federal hydro work group develop a list of the specific questions the TMT will be asked to answer at its September 19 meeting. Ruff replied that the hydro work group will be meeting on September 14; that group could develop a list of questions, which the IT could then review and pass along to the TMT by the 19th, he said.

Would you expect the TMT to answer those questions at their September 19 meeting? Silverberg asked. I would say the TMT would discuss the questions at their September 19 meeting, and attempt to answer them, and provide the requested information, to the IT prior to the IT’s October meeting, Nigro replied. There was general agreement that the IT will develop and provide this list of questions to the TMT at its September 19 meeting; the TMT will then provide answers to those questions at the October 4th IT meeting.

#### ***4. Five-Year Implementation Plan.***

Comments on the plan are due tomorrow, Silverberg said; this item is on the agenda to give the states and tribes an opportunity to share the gist of their remarks at today’s meeting. Nigro noted that the Oregon Governor’s office has informed the Corps and Bonneville that Oregon will be providing its comments by the end of September, but will not be able to meet tomorrow’s deadline. In response to a question, Nigro said project prioritization criteria, performance measures, the R, M & E plan and the “crediting” concept are the main areas where Oregon will be focusing its comments. In response to another question, Bill Tweit said Washington’s comments are unlikely to be extremely weighty; he is working on them now, and will deliver them to BPA as soon as possible -- probably within a week. In response to a request from John Palensky, Katherine Cheney said that BPA could probably provide an update on the schedule and funding facets of the Five-Year Implementation Plan at the October 4th IT meeting. We’ll put it on the agenda, Silverberg said.

The group devoted a few minutes of discussion to the Council's rolling provincial review process; Palensky noted that CBFWA has identified \$82 million in priority projects in the Columbia Plateau province alone, about half of the total funding Bonneville has indicated will be available. The IT needs to be aware that the Council has asked CBFWA to develop a prioritized list of Columbia Plateau projects, given the fact that there are still a number of other provinces yet to be reviewed, he said. The group also discussed the connection – and potential disconnect – between the Council process and the Five-Year Implementation Plan development, as well as potential sources of funding other than BPA.

### ***5. Discussion of Suggestions for Changes to Existing Implementation Processes and Procedures.***

There was general agreement that this topic was substantially covered under Agenda Item 3. Palensky asked the IT participants to consider this issue, with the goal of having a more substantive discussion about it at the group's October meeting. He added that the Implementation Team guidelines are available from the Regional Forum website, and suggested that a review of the guidelines might be a good place to start. Nigro suggested that Palensky develop a list of the specific questions the IT needs to consider.

A few minutes of additional discussion yielded the following specific suggestions:

- Need a discussion of how to make this a truly regional forum; in particular, how to engage the tribes, Idaho and Montana – what changes can be made to include them?
- Need a commitment to a firm schedule under which to address this issue.
- Need clarification of the relative roles of IT and the Regional Executives.

Silverberg went around the table and checked to ensure that all of the participating agencies are committed to having this discussion and encouraging more state and tribal participation; all of today's participants (ODFW, USFWS, NMFS, WDFW, BPA and the Corps) said they are fully committed to this concept. Nigro asked Silverberg to contact the missing states and tribes directly, to find out what the group can do to encourage their full participation; it was so agreed. It was further agreed that Palensky will distribute the current draft of the IT guidelines prior to the next meeting, to give the IT participants a chance to review and discuss them within their agencies. Hopefully, she said, you'll be able to discuss the role of the Regional Forum with your executives, so that they can have some discussion of that issue at the next meeting of the Regional Executives on October 3. We'll put an update on this issue on the October IT agenda, Ruff said.

Nigro observed that, in the past, the primary reason the tribes decline to participate in the Regional Forum is their feeling that their input is largely ignored by the federal action agencies. Hevlin noted that offering travel funds to encourage tribal participation might be helpful in bringing them to the

table.

## **6. Other.**

**A. Scientific Review of the R, M & E Plan.** In response to a question raised at the last IT meeting, Katherine Cheney said BPA does plan to solicit scientific review of the R, M and E sections of both the Five-Year and annual implementation plans.

**B. Update on the Safety-Net Issue.** In response to another question from last meeting, Cheney said BPA's expectation is that the operating agencies for both FCRPS and non-FCRPS projects will provide funding on a case-by-case basis to implement whatever hatchery safety-net plans may be developed.

## **7. Next IT Meeting Date.**

The next meeting of the Implementation Team was set for Thursday, October 4. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.